

Book Reviews

Catherine E. Purcell, Bruce A. Arrigo, *The Psychology of Lust Murder – Paraphilia, Sexual Killing and Serial Homicide*, Academic Press, Elsevier, 2006, ISBN-13: 978-0-12-370510-5, 10: 0-12-370510-X

“*Eating people is wrong*,” declared the eponymous hero of Flanders & Swann’s comic song, “The Reluctant Cannibal.” Unfortunately not everyone quite agrees, and “The Psychology of Lust Murder” sets out to explain why that should be. To be clear, the book deals not with those murderers, serial or otherwise, who kill after sexual crimes, to attempt to avoid detection, but with those where there is a profound connection between sexual gratification and fatal violence. The lust murderer harbours deep seated, erotically charged fantasies in which his attacks and killings sate, on a temporary and partial basis, the need for more sexual violence.

This is a relatively short book, some 158 pages long, which at times reads like a PhD thesis that has somehow escaped the university psychology department library into the wider domain, an impression backed up by the 10 pages of references, all cited in academic style within the text, which at times does not help readability to a newcomer to the field. Nonetheless, it does appear to offer a comprehensive overview of the psychological models and theories in the field. The authors move on to produce a new “integrative” model, arguing, cogently, that the sexual behaviour of these killers is simply at the far end of a continuous spectrum of human sexuality, rather than being completely disconnected from normal behaviour.

Paraphilia, sexual arousal to objects or situations that are not part of normative stimulation, involves intense, erotically laden, arousing images that produce sexual urges or behaviours involving either non-human objects (such as fetishes) or the suffering of oneself, one’s partner or children, or non-consenting individuals. Previously it had been argued that “normal paraphiliacs” can behave sexually without the paraphiliac stimulation, whereas those defined as abnormal cannot, but the authors, prefer a mild-moderate-severe continuum where an individual can move in either direction in the spectrum depending on external factors. Clearly, some paraphilias, such as fetishes, are not in any way criminal and are part of normal sexuality when exhibited in mild form but some such as exhibitionism, and paedophilia are clearly within the criminal spectrum.

Erotophonophilia (lust murder), usually involves a mutilating attack involving, breasts, genitalia, and rectum, typically postmortem. Killing is integral to the sexual

excitement and in most cases the level of violence escalates with each attack. What then is the psychological basis for such behaviour? The proposed model has numerous factors, but the key component is “orgasmic conditioning.” This seems to bear some resemblance to Pavlovian conditioning but being based around compulsive, very frequent masturbation, with accompanying increasingly violent fantasies, aided by facilitators, such as alcohol & cannabis (decreasing inhibitions), and pornography (fueling the sexual fantasies). However, this cycle is superimposed upon numerous formative features during childhood and adolescence, low self esteem, and subsequent extrinsic stressors such as job loss, or divorce.

The theory is put to the test by comparison with one of the best known lust murderers, Jeffrey Dahmer, who confessed to killing 17 men, and was subsequently given 15 consecutive life sentences equivalent to 957 years in custody. He was subsequently beaten to death by another murderer serving a life sentence. He appears to have exhibited a series of escalating paraphilias, commencing with exhibitionism, sleeping with a clothes dummy and abducting, drugging and fondling a 13-year-old boy. Both of these offences came to police attention and resulted in convictions. He then abducted the boy’s brother, in revenge for the family having gone to the police, but the boy escaped, naked, having been beaten but the police made the mistake of returning him to Dahmer’s residence having decided that this was a homosexual lover’s tiff, without having checked the databases showing that Dahmer had been convicted of sexually assaulting the younger brother.

Dahmer took to hiring and drugging male prostitutes, and is said to have experienced immense sexual gratification from hearing his sleeping lovers hearts. He moved on to killing them “as it was better to have them with me dead than to have them leave,” and then to having intercourse with his victims when they were dead and subsequently to keeping souvenirs from their bodies, drinking their blood & eating parts of them, until he reached the level of removing the skin from his victim, and hanging the skeleton from the shower head, having eaten many of the organs, whilst photographing the scene and using the photographs as masturbatory facilitators.

The authors showed that Dahmer fits their model, with parental conflict, and maternal mental health problems, leading to low self esteem. Stressors such as job loss and low social status add to the equation, clearly his life does demonstrate the relationship between paraphilia, sexual homicide and serial murder.

The model does indeed propose a psychological construct of *how* Dahmer came to be what he was, but the authors do not touch on *why* he did. What was it that made Dahmer different from the many other people with difficult backgrounds, with perhaps mild paraphilias, in whom the combination does not lead to horror? That question is left unanswered – but then the book didn't set out to answer it.

In conclusion, the book sets out to propose and test a psychological model for the development of lust murder, as a piece of subjective research, and in that it appears, to succeed. It's likely target audience is the forensic psychologist. For the non-specialist reader, it offers some insight to the psycho-pathological models but frustrates in that the model is not one that suggests any obvious potential early therapeutic intervention to prevent escalation,

and does not provide any form of framework for investigation or detection of such crimes. It certainly won't help the quest to be "tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime," but it may just help us perceive that the perpetrator of such crimes may be a victim of their own externally-conditioned aberrant psychological constructs, easy access to facilitators such as pornography, alcohol and drugs, and an extension of a continuum of human sexuality.

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Introduction to Homeland Security, J.A. Bullock et al. Butterworth-Heinemann (2005), 534 pp.

Hail a new academic discipline: "Homeland Security"! That's the first message from the authors of this attractively presented book, which emerges as a response to September 11. The USA Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security have more than a minor connection. The authors outline the scope of Homeland Security in terms of preventing terrorist attacks, minimising damage and enhancing recovery from such attacks. Yes, and in case you had not guessed, the Homeland is the United States! The book examines the response to terrorism on a grand scale and the examples cited certainly indicate the finances which have been thrown at the problem in the US. From a European perspective, there is something which is so obvious, yet completely missing – prevention and even prediction. The stereotypical European would certainly want to know what makes the terrorist tick, get inside their heads, predict their actions, think about working towards helping them see the error of their ways or even consider solutions based upon diplomacy and negotiation. In contrast, the US perspective pervading this book is the implacable correctness of the US view and the way that the US can ultimately win through with confidence, by power and spending. The historic overview does nothing to examine the different motivations of different terrorists or why terrorism exists.

The book has been constructed in a professional fashion. There are few typographical errors and lots of engag-

ing colour photographs. The overall theme is one of reassurance about the extent to which the US authorities have addressed this problem and got it under control. However, the examples given do seem to provide a slightly different perspective.

Clearly, somewhat hurriedly put together as a temporary sort of textbook, it does not really read like one. The review questions at the end of each chapter do seem to sit rather strangely. There is no doubt that it focuses upon those individuals whose professional roles are to protect the US against terrorism. It aims to turn this "new subject" into an academic one. There is some academic detail which has forensic interest. There are some nice summaries of the effects of various poisons and toxins which have been clearly constructed with considerable care and thought.

Published prior to the "hurricane season" of the fall of 2005, some of the financial comparisons of the costs of various historic disasters affecting the US are already clearly well out of date. This book will go down as a historical record of opinion and the situation immediately post-Sept. 11. It is hard to imagine that it will have a huge appeal to those outside the US.

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